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ADDITIONAL FACTORS

IN WESTERN EUROPEAN OPINION

RELEVANT TO

FAR EASTERN ISSUES

October 15, 1955

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RELEVANT TO
FAR EASTERN ISSUES**

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FOREWORD

This report provides a supplement to "Opinion Trends in the Aftermath of Geneva," September 23. It presents an interpretation of Western European opinion since Geneva on a number of Far Eastern issues and problems.

The data in this report are taken primarily from poll data drawn from USIA's Barometer Surveys -- particularly from the comprehensive August survey.

The cooperation of the USIA is gratefully acknowledged.

Nelson A. Rockefeller

October 15, 1955

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WESTERN EUROPEAN OPINION ON
FAR EASTERN ISSUES

1. Highlights

A number of questions in the August survey were directed at Far Eastern problems - Formosa, general views toward Nationalist and Communist Chinese, and most importantly - U.S. policies.

The U.S.-Chinese Communist Ambassadorial talks in Geneva had already started when these questions were asked.

Judging from the over-all response to Far Eastern problems, as well as from responses to specific "issue" questions, it appears that:

Western Europeans, as a whole, are interested in Formosa and the "problems" associated with Nationalist China and Communist China only to the extent that they feel an actual eruption of these problems - meaning involvement in war - is imminent

With fear of war in the Far East at a low point, most Europeans have little real interest in the problems.

Perhaps the most significant feature of this over-all disinclination to feel really concerned about the Far East is that Western European opinion seems more willing to accept U.S. actions without undue criticism.

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Within this context, Western European opinion

-- favors Communist China's admission to the UN.

-- is about divided on whether the U.S. should oppose

by force of arms a Communist attack on Formosa.

-- overwhelmingly prefers "not to take sides" in a

war between "Communist and anti-Communist powers"

or, more specifically between the U.S. and Communist

China.

-- would rather see Formosa put under UN control

than remain under Nationalist China or go to

Communist China.

-- holds a very unfavorable opinion of both Nationalist

China and Communist China.

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In contrast to the widespread sense of alarm that spread through Western Europe last February over the flare-up in the Formosa Straits, most people now feel that the chances of war breaking out in the Far East are fairly remote.

In three major countries -- Great Britain, France, and West Germany (the question was not asked in Italy) -- an average of only 6% of the general public -- 5% of the upper level - opinion leadership group -- thought the danger of a Far Eastern war has become greater in the last few months.

-- 32% (general sample) - 42% (upper level) -- thought the danger to be less.
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- 4 -2. Communist China and U.S. Policy

In the net, responses to a question dealing with whether the U.S. is being "too tough," "too conciliatory," or "about right" in its relations with Communist China -- indicate somewhat greater favorable than unfavorable reaction to U.S. policies at the present time.

	Britain		West Germany		France	
	All %	Upper %	All %	Upper %	All %	Upper %
Too Tough	32	36	16	24	20	17
Too Conciliatory	7	7	8	10	7	9
About Right	30	35	27	32	15	22
No Opinion	<u>31</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>52</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Apart from the large percentages in Germany and France who have No Opinion on this question - a possibly significant feature of these responses is the virtual split in opinion in Britain and France between those who think U.S. policies are "Too Tough" and those who think they are "About Right." While these responses certainly do not underrate the underlying 'touchiness' of opinion toward U.S. Far Eastern actions, they probably reflect - in the net - a better balance of support for U.S. actions toward Communist China than has seemed to prevail for some time -- certainly better than last February.

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On whether or not Communist China should be admitted into the United Nations at this time -- pluralities in all four of the major countries feel that it should be.

Composite Results

However, note the large percentage in both groups -- particularly among the general public -- who hold no opinion at all on this important question. Whether this is a symptom of basic disinterest in the Far Eastern problems or a carry-over of the kind of lack of interest in non-crisis "issues" that seems to characterize over-all Western European opinion at this time* is difficult to say.

That it may be in part the latter is indicated by responses to a series of questions of an ascending order of "crisis."

*See Additional Factors in Western European Opinion, October

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To the question: If Communist China should attack Formosa, do you think America should oppose the attack by force of arms, or don't you think so?

Composite - Four Countries

To the question: In the conflict between the Communist and anti-
Communist powers in Asia, do you think (survey country) should take
a side or not take a side? Which side?

(Britain, West Germany, Italy - not asked in France)

Com- Anti-

	Communist	Not take side	No opinion
ALL	1% *****	63%	15% *****

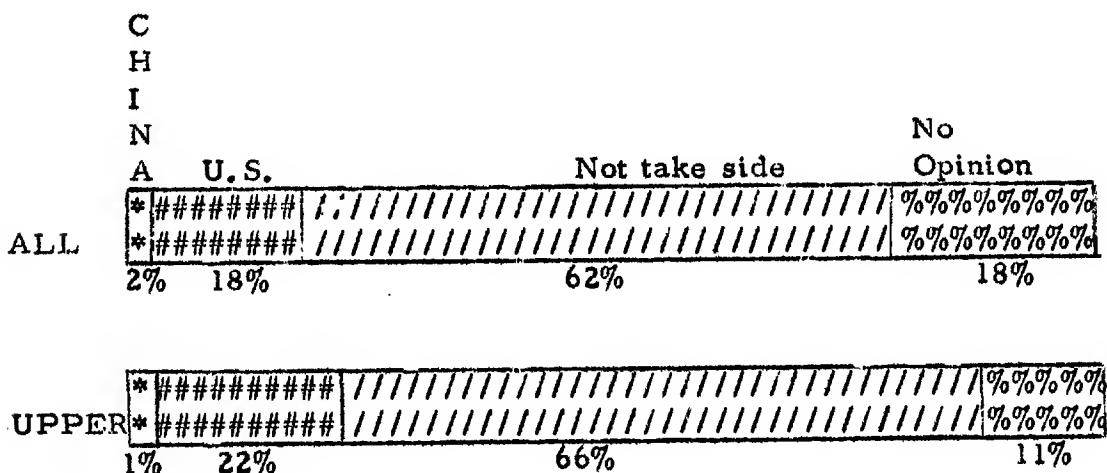
UPPER	1%	25%	63%	11%
	11%	25%	63%	1%
LOWER	11%	25%	63%	1%

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To the question: If it should come to a war between China (Communist) and the U.S., do you think this country should take a side or not take a side? Which side?

Composite - Four Countries



-- As can be seen from the responses to this series of questions

- Western European opinion, as a whole, responds relatively favorably to a situation calling for somewhat abstract support of "right" over "wrong" as reflected in the question as to whether or not the U.S. should oppose a Communist attack.

But these scruples are apparently abandoned in situations calling for "personal involvement." As indicated, a large majority prefers Not to Take Sides.

-- Note also that the "softness" of opinion - as indicated by the extent of No opinion response - decreases as the degree of personal involvement called for by the situation increases.

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On the ultimate "crisis" question -- "If it should come to a war between China and the U.S. do you think this country should take a side or not take a side? Which side? -- there is a relatively encouraging degree of support for "siding with the U.S." among better informed British groups as compared with other sectors of European opinion.

	Britain		Other Countries	
	All %	Upper %	All %	Upper %
Side with China	2	3	1	-
Side with U.S.	35	44	12	15
Not take side	50	47	67	72
No opinion	13	6	20	13

Surprisingly enough - considering the high propensity among Western Europeans generally for not taking sides - British opinion leaders almost split between "siding with the U.S." and "not taking sides." This may of course be a reflection of far greater interest in Far Eastern problems in Britain than elsewhere but it would also seem to indicate that in spite of criticism of U.S. Far Eastern actions - occasionally (last February!) reaching a crescendo - better informed Britains show a relatively high degree of support for the U.S. in a "crisis."

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French opinion on the "crisis" question confirms other indicators of rather massive popular "disinvolvement" from the Far East and its problems:

	<u>France</u>	
	<u>All</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Upper</u> <u>%</u>
Side with China	2	-
Side with U. S.	5	8
Not take side	71	76
No opinion	22	16

It seems perfectly clear from their response that Frenchmen are fairly unanimously agreed not to get re-involved in Far Eastern troubles.

3. What about Formosa?

Western European opinion as a whole plays "safe" in the disposition of Formosa -- fairly sizeable pluralities would rather see Formosa put under UN control than go to either Nationalist China or Peiping.

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Composite--Britain, West Germany, France
(Not asked in Italy)

But the extent of No Opinion - 43% - indicates the basic lack of interest in the problem.

On a follow-up question, a majority of those who thought Formosa should be put under UN control felt that if the island could not be put under the UN it should remain with Chiang Kai-shek.

But this represents a heavily diluted token of positive support for continued Nationalist control of Formosa.

Perhaps a clearer indicator of the underlying lack of interest of the Western Europeans in the Formosa problem appeared in responses to "Who do you like?" questions.

-- Only a minuscule percentage registered "Good Opinion" toward either Nationalist China or Communist China.

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